

**ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**  
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL GROWTH  
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO  
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Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

Members:

James Allen  
Meredith Andreucci  
Hon. Vince Anello  
G. Michael Brown  
Drew Cerza  
Hon. Elise Cusack  
Hon. William Davignon  
Hon. Albert DeBenedetti  
Tim Doolittle  
Hon. Wright Ellis  
Matthew Enstice  
Samuel Ferraro  
Richard Geiger  
Hon. Timothy Kennedy  
Celeste Lawson  
Maria Lehman  
Hon. Peter McMahon  
Hon. Gerald Meal  
Hal Morse  
Hon. Sean O'Connor  
Dr. Gary Praetzel  
F. Tim Reese  
David Rosenwasser  
Laurence Rubin  
Diane Ruzala  
Laura St. Pierre  
Hon. Demone Smith  
Hector Titus  
Timothy Wanamaker  
Charles Webb  
Peter Wendel

Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting  
April 1, 2005

**Present:** Burmaster, Weinstein, Anello, Davignon, Ellis, Enstice, Ferraro, Geiger (proxy), Lawson, McMahon, Morse (proxy), Reese, Ruzala, Titus, Wendel, Casale, Ross, Sheffer, Witul

**Excused:** Andreucci, Cerza, Cusack, Doolittle, Kennedy, Meal, Praetzel, Rosenwasser, Webb, Holt

**Absent:** Allen, Brown, DeBenedetti, Lehman, O'Connor, Rubin, St. Pierre, Smith, Wanamaker

The meeting was called to order at 8:38 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster and Barry Weinstein, MD. Co-Chair Burmaster explained the reasons for the delay of our first general meeting of 2005, including the "issues" facing Erie County. He asserted that these issues cannot deter ENRP; we have existed without political influence since we started, we work on a multiplicity of interests, and we will continue to meet and produce valuable projects for the two counties and the region.

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale  
Hon. George Holt, Jr.  
Hon. William Ross  
John Sheffer, II  
Lawrence Witul

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

ENRP Member William Davignon asked how the group was being funded for the year. Co-Chair Weinstein replied that last year Erie County paid the majority of the administrator's salary, but this year that hasn't happened. Weinstein added that he is acting as a holdover chair, as Erie County Legislature Chairman George Holt, Jr. has not yet appointed a co-chair for 2005. ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk added that Niagara County has contributed financially in both 2004 and 2005, that the Niagara County Building Trades (thanks to ENRP Member Hector Titus) also contributed in 2005, and that he is also now consulting part-time with Niagara University's Center for Economic Development Through Hospitality and Tourism (thanks to ENRP Member Dr. Gary Praetzel).

Minutes of the December, 2004 meeting were approved, with a change on page two. (In the first paragraph the sentence, "ENRP Member Wright Ellis noted that the process is six months behind

schedule” should be regarding the Framework for Regional Growth, not power relicensing as written.) The Co-Chairs welcomed new member Timothy Kennedy, the 2<sup>nd</sup> District Representative to the Erie County Legislature. ENRP Administrator Kniazuk reviewed the 2005 meeting dates and subcommittee assignments, and detailed grants being pursued for the small business assistance website and for general operations through the Alliance for Regional Stewardship.

ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro and Mr. Kevin Donovan, co-chairs of the Relicensing Consensus Committee (RCC), updated the group on Power Relicensing, <http://niagara.nypa.gov> or [www.wnyrelicensing.com](http://www.wnyrelicensing.com). The RCC was formed in 2000, and since 2002 has been working formally with the New York Power Authority (NYPA). They handed out a document listing accomplishments to date, and spoke of the timeline for next steps. The settlement agreement will be sent to the stakeholders for review to assure that what was agreed to is properly represented. By August 31, 2005 the settlement agreement will be filed. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has a two year period to review the submitted settlement agreement.

Donovan commented that, unlike issues such as the Peace Bridge, people came together for the majority of this process; all the way until negotiations. He added that in his opinion we could have procured more if we would have stuck together through the negotiations. That said, everyone did come out ahead of where they would have been if they all went at it alone from the start. Further, the price of electricity will not rise under the settlement agreement, and this is very important to both businesses and organized labor. Donovan concluded by saying he was very proud of what the RCC accomplished.

Co-Chair Weinstein asked if a summary of the agreement could be produced. Ferraro replied that the agreement itself is not that long; 30 to 40 pages. Weinstein, however, was looking for a one-page summary, to which Ferraro noted that summaries were divided into stakeholder groups.

Weinstein also inquired as to whether we were “leaving more on the table” and should therefore continue to negotiate. Donovan answered that Buffalo, Erie County, and the Olmsted Parks Conservancy were collectively offered \$2 million per year and rejected that offer. Niagara University is also in further negotiations. Other than that, the negotiations have been completed.

As a follow-up, Weinstein asked about City of Buffalo Mayor Anthony Masiello's proposal that would provide a pot of money from relicensing for cultural organizations in the city. As Donovan noted, Buffalo is still in negotiations and so it is possible, but also noted that FERC can okay the package without all negotiations being settled. Ferraro added that what NYPA is doing in negotiating a settlement package is not required by FERC.

Weinstein suggested that ENRP could form a group to help negotiate this cultural funding proposal, to which Donovan replied that we may not be recognized at such a late stage of the game, but that we could negotiate through the Buffalo-Erie County-Olmsted group. ENRP Member Vince Anello noted that NYPA has made it clear they are not welcoming new negotiations. He added that he believes the City of Niagara Falls lost in the negotiations, especially in light of "what we lost in waterfront and neighborhoods."

ENRP Member F. Tim Reese asserted that the most important thing is that the price of power not go up. If the benefits being offered get to a point that the costs are passed on to the power users, it's no longer a good deal. Donovan noted that NYPA is being adamant that they will stay below the negotiated cap; that could be one reason they are being so firm in their offer to Buffalo-Erie County-Olmsted.

ENRP Member Celeste Lawson, on the topic of the cultural funding proposal, told the group of a letter written by City of Buffalo Mayor Anthony Masiello and Chief of Staff Eva Hassett to the Arts Council asking for arts constituents to rally around Mayor Masiello's plan.

Ferraro predicted that now that the settlement draft is out there, more municipalities may break away from the settlement. Some are looking to engage legal counsel when they really should be contacting NYPA first. In response to a question from Ellis, Anello added that Lewiston is also trying to go into separate negotiations with NYPA, but NYPA is not allowing it. This comes after Lewiston agreed to the division of funds in the settlement proposal. If they were now to get more, it would come at the expense of other municipalities, not from a new appropriation.

ENRP Ad Hoc Member John Sheffer called the RCC "enormously important and complex," with extraordinary work being done through

the group. On Ellis' motion, ENRP voted unanimously to issue a letter of appreciation to the RCC's co-chairs. To illustrate the task of the RCC, Co-Chair Burmaster asked how many meetings they participated in. According to Donovan, the answer was "probably hundreds."

Returning to the topic of Lewiston, Co-Chair Burmaster noted that they were "in the room" for the negotiations. Donovan replied that expectations were higher than they should have been. As Lewiston is the physical base for the NYPA, they felt they were entitled to much more. Burmaster asserted that there are "no free rides;" if a building gets built by NYPA, for instance, the municipality will still be responsible for operations and maintenance in the long term. According to Burmaster, amenities are nice but a settlement containing nothing but low cost power would have been better. That was Niagara Falls' position, Anello added.

Co-Chair Burmaster inquired whether it was possible to include Niagara County culturals in the Buffalo-Erie County proposal. Following Donovan's response that it was, Co-Chair Weinstein motioned that ENRP issue a letter to Buffalo and Erie County supporting a proposal that includes relicensing money for culturals in Erie and Niagara Counties. The motion was carried unanimously. Donovan warned, however, not to have high expectations since only \$2 million annually has been offered so far to the Buffalo-Erie County-Olmsted group.

Ferraro presented an update on the Framework for Regional Growth, [www.regionalframework.com](http://www.regionalframework.com). He told the group that the process is continuing, and that they are trying to "work through" Erie County's problems. There will be a steering committee meeting on April 19 to let them know the effort is back on track. Co-Chair Weinstein asked if there was a revised timeframe. Ferraro detailed that the draft would be completed and sent to the public. The finished product should be ready by mid to late summer.

There was no update on the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS).

Sheffer presented an update on the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative. The release of the report in January, 2005 was the conclusion of the strategic planning phase. The implementation phase, now underway, is "critically important." The recommendations are being tweaked to reflect the ongoing budget problems, while recognizing that those problems make the effort that much more

important. The Advisory and Oversight group is currently being populated.

There was no old business. Under new business Lawson told the group that on June 25 United States Senator Hillary Clinton will be hosting an Arts in Economic Development Conference at Syracuse University.

Also under new business, Reese noted that the replacement power agreement expires at the end of the year. By state law it would then be distributed to the entire state. Both the New York State Senate and Assembly passed reauthorization bills, but the language was separate enough that Governor Pataki did not sign them. The Senate then passed another bill. In the Assembly Committee on Energy Chairman Paul Tonko hasn't yet moved the bill through the committee. The indication is that it is because of the budget, so hopefully now that the budget is passed it will move forward. Reese requested that any ENRP members who have contacts in the Assembly – especially Tonko – please contact them to get this important legislation approved. Donovan added that there are over 30,000 jobs tied directly to replacement power. ENRP voted unanimously to send a letter urging passage of replacement power legislation.

The next meeting date was set for Friday, June 24 at 8:30 a.m. in Erie County (location to be determined). The Co-Chairs thanked the group, and the meeting was adjourned at 10 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk

June 17, 2005